

**CENTER FOR  
STRATEGIC AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES (CSIS)**

**THE STATUS OF U.S. EFFORTS IN AFGHANISTAN**

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**COLONEL DAVID LAMM, FORMER CHIEF OF STAFF,  
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JOHN HAMRE: Ladies and gentlemen, if I could ask you to find your seats because we do want to get started. We have got a fabulous event in front of us tonight, and I'm so glad that all of you are here. First, let me say thank you to our partners from the Schieffer School of Journalism. We were delighted to have this opportunity to partner with you. Thank you very much, Larry.

And this is something important for us. And let me – I would like to tell a little story on what we are trying to do with this series and why it's important. About three years ago, I was asked to chair or monitor a conference that the McCormick Tribune Foundation was hosting. And it was on a conference between – half of it was military and half was journalists. It was a small conference about how does the journalism and military work together? And I got to the reception the night before and the tension was so thick, you could cut it with a butter knife, you know. It was a lot of uncertainty between these two constituencies.

But I said to them the next morning, I said if you think about it, these are two institutions that probably have the most in common with each other, if you think about it. Now, journalists should look at people in the military and see people that are willing to fight and die for a country that honors freedom of the press. And journalists are the ones that make it a country worth fighting and dying for because they make this a better country. That is the essence of this partnership. Now there is no one that I know of who more embodies that spirit of constructive journalism than Bob Schieffer. This is an icon in the landscape of journalism in America. And I know he is – I don't know if he blushes or not at his age – (Laughter) – most of us lose those blush cells, you know.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Actually, I'm enjoying it. (Laughter.)

MR. HAMRE: Actually, it happens to be true. And when TCU decided to name their journalism school after Bob, I thought it was a great step. What we are really trying to do in part with this series is not just to bring to you all an interesting evening, to hear fascinating people talk about an important timely subject for America, but to also demonstrate what good journalism really is and what it means and to hold it up as an exemplar for what we think Washington needs. It needs this constructive dialogue between journalists, policymakers. And so this is a great experiment, and we know it's going to be a success. You're all evidence of that it's going to be a great success.

Thank you all for coming. This is the first of the series. Bob, we're really grateful. We look forward to working on this throughout the year. And then we will step back and say what worked, what didn't work. But we know it's going to be a success tonight. Bob, let me turn to you. You're going to open this up and carry the rest of the meeting.

BOB SCHIEFFER: All right, well, thank you very much, Dr. Hamre. And I tell you, this is a great honor for me, and it's certainly an honor for TCU and our journalism school there.

We're trying to teach young journalists how to cover the world, and we think we start with the basics. And that is to expose them to as many opinion makers and smart people who know something about subjects that we possibly can. And we think that is the way you get to be a reporter.

And this is a wonderful partnership with CSIS. We hope to do this once a month. We'll pick a topic, and we'll try to find the smartest people we can, and we'll come and talk about it. We won't draw any conclusions. This is being streamed – I guess that is the word we call it – back to the Schieffer School in Fort Worth. And so the students there will be watching it. And we are going to talk about Afghanistan today. As far as this partnership, I would just say this as Humphrey Bogart said in "Casablanca," Doctor, I think this is going to be the beginning of a beautiful friendship. (Laughter.) At least that I certainly hope it is, and I appreciate you doing this. Our panel today – it would be hard to beat the panel to talk about what they're going to talk about.

And Master Nicholas Burns, undersecretary of State for political affairs for two more days.

NICHOLAS BURNS: Exactly.

MR. SCHIEFFER: (Chuckles.) Before his current assignment, he was the U.S. permanent representative to NATO, where he headed the combined State Defense Department U.S. Mission to NATO at a time when the alliance was committed to new missions in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the global war against terrorism. Five years on the National Security Council. He is retiring, as I say, from the State Department next month.

Steve Coll, president and CEO of New American Foundation, staff writer at the New Yorker magazine, two-time winner of the Pulitzer. He spent 20 years as a foreign correspondent and senior editor of the Washington Post. He was a managing editor there from '98 to 2004, author of six books, including "Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA." He has another one coming out this year, "The Bin Ladens: An Arabian Family in the American Century."

Colonel David Lamm, U.S. Army retired. He is the current chief of staff of the Near East South Asia Center for Strategic Studies at the National Defense University. Chief of staff of the Combined Forces Command in Afghanistan from 2004 to 2005, from 2006 to 2007, served consecutively as the director for Afghanistan in the Office of the Secretary of Defense and as the interagency coordinator for the Defense Policy Analysis Office. He served as an assistant professor of history at West Point and as a professor of strategy at the National War College.

And finally, Rick Barton, who is the senior advisor at CSIS and co-director of the Post-Conflict Reconstruction Project. His work is informed by 12 years of experience in nearly 30 global hotspots including serving as the U.N. deputy high commissioner for refugees in Geneva and as the first director of the Office of Transition Initiatives at the U.S. Agency for International Development.

One of the things that we try to teach the students at the journalism school at TCU is that in a totalitarian society, there is only one source of news, and that is the government. And in a democracy, we are much luckier because we have a second source of information, and that is an independent press. I thought today we would just set the stage for this discussion by calling first on the government's representative here – (laughter) – for two days. Give us your assessment, Ambassador, of exactly what the situation is in Afghanistan right now. And then I think we'd go to Steve Coll, the historian, to give us an independent view of what is going on in Afghanistan. You have the floor.

R. NICHOLAS BURNS: Well, thank you very, very much. It's a pleasure to be here at CSIS and a pleasure to be with you. And congratulations to TCU and the Schieffer School for inaugurating this series. I'm very honored to be part of the inauguration of this. I would say on Afghanistan that we ought to situate it first in American strategic interests. (Off-side conversation.) Better?

MR. SCHIEFFER: That's it.

MR. BURNS: If you missed what I said at first, it was to congratulate Bob Schieffer for inaugurating this series, congratulate TCU for the Schieffer School and CSIS as well. I'm very honored to be here with all of these individuals, but especially with Bob. I have great respect for the work he has done as a journalist for many, many years.

I thought I'd start off by saying a word about our policy in Afghanistan and just trying to situate Afghanistan in our strategic filament. Before 9/11, I think there were very few Americans who would have said that South Asia was a region of vital strategic interest for the United States. Important, obviously, but vital – we thought we would reserve vital national interest for our interest, say, during the First and Second World War in Europe or the Cold War in Europe or certainly the Middle East as it has developed over the last decade or so. But there is no question that what is happening now in Afghanistan and Pakistan and India is of vital interest to our country.

From a more negative and challenging perspective, we face a crisis in Afghanistan that is extraordinarily difficult for our country and for the NATO alliance. For NATO, it may be an existential crisis, meaning that if NATO cannot succeed in Afghanistan, it may have a very negative impact on the ability of the alliance to move forward. It's the first ground mission in the nearly 60-year history of the alliance. We only fought two wars, Bosnia and Kosovo both by air. This is the first time we have tried to put a great number of troops on the ground, fight a ground war, and in this case, a counterinsurgency campaign against a very tough foe in the Taliban and al Qaeda.

For the United States, very important in these three countries that we now succeed to defend our vital national interests. And Pakistan, right next door to Afghanistan, a country which is playing a major role negatively and positively in the outcome in Afghanistan, we have a lot at stake. I would say that if you look at our worldwide struggle with global terrorist groups, there is no more important country to us than Pakistan. That is where al Qaeda is, that is where the Taliban is, as well, as an organization. Both of them have sanctuaries or safe havens that are

allowing them to come across the border to attack our troops and the Afghan National Army in Afghanistan and have a profound impact on that country.

India, important because it's a major player in Afghanistan with its economic aid, with its reconstruction, with assistance to infrastructure development – India, as well because we have a new and emerging strategic partnership with that country. It's on the positive side of our interests in South Asia. So if we look at the problem of Afghanistan, it's situated in a wider region, which is of vastly increased importance to our country and will be for as far into the future as we can see.

On Afghanistan itself, I think what is going well, and I'll just try to say a word about what is going well because probably most of the others won't. (Laughter.) And then tell you how I see the challenges there. What is going well in Afghanistan is that you have a democratically elected government in a place without a long tradition of democratically elected governments; a leader who has shown a capacity to work well with many of his colleagues in the parliament in Kabul; a leader who has reached out both to Europe, to the Middle East countries, and to many of the Asian countries, Japan and South Korea, to elicit a substantial amount of assistance, economic as well as military from beyond Afghanistan's borders; and a government that, while it faces a number of challenges, has been able to put into the field now an Afghan National Army that is slowly building up to the capacity that we would want to see it at that eventually might be able to take over the security challenge – eventually – to protect the country from its internal foes and to protect the borders of the country. That is a longer-range ambition.

This government is beset by an extraordinary number of challenges: corruption from within, a very slow and fitful training of the police. I think it has been a disappointment to most of us to see the poor performance of all of us in trying to help the Afghan police develop. It is a country that has seen its largest poppy production over the last two years, largest in recorded history with a major narcotics problem. And we really haven't arrived at a situation with the government where we have been able to figure out a strategy that has been successful either to inhibit people from growing poppy or to selling it on the world market. And it is a major problem for our European allies where the majority of the heroin in Europe comes from Afghanistan.

And a country that is beset by massive internal instability, the threat by these two groups: al Qaeda and the Taliban, but also the fact that the central government has been unable to extend its control outside the capital city to large parts of the country. So Afghanistan is still very much a work in progress as a country trying to stabilize itself after a long period of instability, of occupation, and internal warfare. Our interest is to see that the government succeeds. Our interest is to marshal military power to defend the country so that it can develop, it can return girls to schools. The Taliban wouldn't let girls attend schools. It can build new schools and health clinics, build roads and electricity grid because it's a country with one of the least developed infrastructures in the world.

On the military side, I'd say that we have done rather well to get NATO in to assist the United States, which had gone in first in the autumn of 2001. We have 30,000 American troops. We had roughly equal number of foreign troops in the country. It is a well-structured mission.

It's a counterinsurgency campaign in the south and east where the great majority of fighting is taking place. The challenge for the military mission is that NATO needs to put its best troops into the south and east, and that is not happening.

Nine of the 26 NATO allies are either in Uruzgan, Helmand, or Kandahar provinces or in the east with the United States. All of the other allies – some of them the largest of our NATO countries, Spain, Italy, Germany, and France, most notably, are in the north and west or in Kabul where there is not a substantial threat and where the fighting is not taking place. And I think the existential question for NATO, an alliance built on the proposition, “all for one and one for all,” is, will those European allies, especially those four large continental allies agreed to shoulder some of the burden in the south and east.

You have heard Secretary Gates and Secretary Rice over the last month or so say it's just not fair that nine allies are shouldering the great majority of the fight against the Taliban and against al Qaeda. And NATO is not going to succeed if we can't convince some of those countries to come south and to go east. There is a lack of helicopter support, a lack of combat-service support, a lack of armor on the ground that has inhibited the military mission, so there are basic challenges there.

The other great challenge – and I conclude on this point, Bob – and the great weakness of the international effort is on the economic civilian reconstruction side. There is a lot of good will on the part of the international community and a surprising amount of money being thrown at the Afghan people and government, but relatively little organization on that civilian side. And we worry about that because you have 30 or 40 donor countries in, all seemingly going in a different direction. There doesn't seem to be a central strategy. There isn't a central person who is trying to coordinate this aid. I think it's a source of frustration for the Afghan authorities themselves to have to work with this large group of countries. And we suggested that the U.N. secretary general ought to appoint one high-powered, aggressive, and experienced person to come in and coordinate the economic side that would match what I see as a very high degree of coordination on the military side, and then to try to unite the two because we're in a counterinsurgency campaign.

And so along with the hard power has to come the soft power. If you liberate a town like Musa Qala – and NATO liberated it several months ago – you have to come right in behind the soldiers, food aid, and aid to refugees and the ability to rebuild that town, and to give people a sense of hope that life under the Afghan National Army is going to be better than life under the Taliban. And we haven't seen that combination of military power and purpose with civilian capacity of the type you'd like to see in one of the world's toughest counterinsurgency campaigns.

So I think that is the great challenge is that more troops on the military side in the east and south, more of a commitment from our European allies, and then a unity between the civilian and military effort altogether. If we can do that, I think it's reasonable to assume that the Afghan government and the international community can be successful in keeping the Taliban at bay – I didn't say defeating them militarily – keeping them at bay to allow the country to develop

politically and economically. If we cannot do that, then I fear we're in for great challenge in Afghanistan. We have to meet that central challenge.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Well, let's go to Steven Coll, who is just back from there. He had a long piece in the New Yorker. And by the way, we will go to questions in the audience after we have, sort of, taken a round up here for a while, so be thinking of questions. Steven, what is your sense of where things are in Afghanistan? You know, what was it, two years after the resistance overthrew the Taliban with the aid of the United States that the central command there was saying that the Taliban had been decimated, that it was no longer a factor. And Master Burns was one of those who said, not so fast. He was not convinced at that time. What happened between now and then and where is this situation now?

STEVEN COLL: Well, I think it's a mixed picture and the trajectory is going in the wrong direction, but not so precipitously that it's irreversible. I think the answer to the question of why the Taliban revived is embedded in the Taliban's own narrative rather than in our narrative. They always saw themselves and said openly if anyone was listening when they were accessible that they intended to regroup and take their time. And, in fact, one of the Taliban's leaders now, elderly, possibly deceased, but succeeded by his sons, Jalaluddin Haqqani, gave an interview to Al Jazeera in the fall of 2001, that is remarkably prescient as this forecast. He said, look, we're going to have to get out of the cities. We're going to have to regroup. We may go through a period where we really have to go underground. But about 2003, 2004, we'll be back, and we'll start to push back out just as we did against the Soviets. And that is more or less what happened.

Now they obviously exploited opportunities that were not inevitable. But in assessing all of that, I think it's important to pull the camera even further back than Nick did – and he was giving a fairly comprehensive overview, which is to look at it from the Taliban's point of view. This is an insurgency that is operating in two countries and that is led by Shuras and councils that have two states as their adversaries, Pakistan and Afghanistan. Its recruits come from many places. Its leadership is concentrated along the Pakistan-Afghan border. And today there are both Pakistani and Afghan Taliban, each of which has a similar campaign in mind against – to adjoining states.

I think this is important because the insurgency is transnational, but policy often is not. Policy is often delivered in national buckets. And even within Afghanistan, it becomes redoubled in complexity by the presence of NATO and the United Nations and the diversity of state actors that are operating inside an Afghan national context. The Taliban enjoy a huge structural advantage, which is that they don't have any of those lines, they don't recognize any of those lines, and it doesn't matter to them at all, so they just exploit the spaces in between.

I think one of the lessons of history if you think about the period running up to 9/11 is that you cannot succeed in Afghanistan if you don't succeed in Pakistan. And that is certainly, I think, an aspect of the present situation.

It was very interesting to listen to Nick and to Secretary Gates and others talk about the debate within NATO about burden sharing, and it's a very compelling argument. And it is, I

think, frustrating for friends of Afghanistan – (mike feedback) – sorry – for friends of Afghanistan to see the diversity of commitments from European armies and nations and so many capable countries concentrating only in the north and places where their efforts are, you know, helpful, but not strategically helping to defeat the Taliban.

But there is another aspect of this, which is the failure to come together in sharing military and other burdens of commitment inhibits the development of a winning strategy because, after all, counterinsurgency is as the army's own manual emphasizes from the first sentence about three-quarters political. And that includes not just soft power, but also a coherent national political strategy to support a legitimate government. And if the partners carrying out that strategy are uncertain about their place in the equation, then they really can't develop a coherent strategy. And I'm afraid that is a strategic problem now in Afghanistan.

I'll just leave it there. We can talk about the –

MR. SCHIEFFER: Well, let me just ask you this. What about al Qaeda? Where does it fit in?

MR. COLL: Well, I think that –

MR. SCHIEFFER: Is it worse now? Is the threat worse?

MR. COLL: The threat – yes, I mean –

MR. SCHIEFFER: Yes?

MR. COLL: Well, as the U.S. government's own intelligence assessment acknowledges, al Qaeda has revitalized itself and reorganized itself as a headquarters operation on the Pakistani side of the border, primarily in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. It is not, by any means, the most numerous or most potent guerilla force in this equation. There is, perhaps, hundreds – a few hundred al Qaeda loyal sworn members up along the border – if you count Uzbeks, you know, you might get a different number – but the core Arab exiled leadership. And they are dangerous because they are successfully running conspiracies against targets in Europe and potentially against the United States. They are dangerous because they are importing ambitions and technologies and tactics that the Taliban – and on both sides of the border – are using.

So in Pakistan, you see IED and other attacks that seem to be coming transnationally from Iraq or by other means. And they are dangerous because they have ambitions that are not tied to territory, so they are not susceptible to the strategies of cooption, isolation and, sort of, neutralization that you would associate with counterinsurgency because they are in a millennial war that doesn't involve – this is not their land, so they don't really make themselves available to the kinds of counterinsurgency strategies that you –

MR. SCHIEFFER: Well, let me just kind of switch to the local news here. Why should Americans be concerned about this? What is the threat to the United States?

MR. COLL: Well, I mean, in August of 2006, a group of conspirators in Britain were broken up by British police and intelligence action with American involvement, I guess. I don't know much about that part of it. And most of the details of that plot are sub judice in Britain, so Americans aren't very familiar with them. When they become available, I think we'll see that that was probably the most potent conspiracy that al Qaeda has cooked up since 9/11.

It is the conspiracy that caused you to no longer be able to carry toothpaste on your airplanes. And if it had succeeded, what are the chances – oh, let's say not very great, 5, 10 percent. If it had succeeded, 900 people would have been dead in the Atlantic Ocean, British and American citizens. And we would be involved militarily along the Pakistan-Afghan border in a big way with all sorts of cascading consequences that would probably be unhappy ones. And I do think that the forensics from that operation trace back to this area, to this headquarters and so do other plots in Denmark and other places, not so ambitious in scale, but serious enough.

And so there is a revitalized leadership of al Qaeda that is directly fomenting attacks against American and European targets and is inculcating ambitions and tactical operations among the two Taliban. So that's a lot. (Chuckles.) That seems like plenty in the world we live in.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Well, let me go over to Colonel Lamm. You're the military man here. What, there are 3,000 more Marines going to Afghanistan this spring.

COLONEL DAVID LAMM: Yes, sir.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Is that enough? Will that make a difference? Do we have a strategy for them when they get there? What is that all about?

COL. LAMM: Well, Marines always make a difference. (Laughter.) And I'm in the Army. They always make a difference. But they have to be placed on the battlefield in the proper way. As Mr. Coll has pointed out, the current structure under which they are going to have to operate, I would surmise that if the Taliban could have drawn up the organizational diagram that would inhibit the coalition and allies, they would have arrived at this conclusion.

It is enormously complex. General McNeal tries to hold it together. And unfortunately, our national leaders have begun, on both sides of the Atlantic, discussing caveats and numbers of soldiers, which really drive the discussion to McNeal's level, the operational tactical level when there is a lot of the piece of the strategy that needs to be fixed. Counterinsurgency strategy is about 20 percent military and about 80 percent of other elements in national power.

From 2003 to 2005 under, what I recall, very strong U.S. leadership in Afghanistan, there was a comprehensive counterinsurgency strategy that – the main effort for the strategy was the 2004 presidential elections, which is an odd thing for a military headquarters to have – set the conditions to run an election. But this energy from the election propelled governance – it propelled the warlords reconciling with the government under a reconciliation program. There were a number of great effects that rolled out of that election.

And basically, what we are missing now is not only a comprehensive strategy, but where to plug in the pieces. And we need, as Americans, first to fix the country team effort, I think. There was a time when General Barno, who my boss, and Zal Khalilzad, the ambassador to Afghanistan, shared office space down the hall from each other. There was no illusions on either the military or civilian side that that was, in fact, a country team and that there was one strategy for the country and that we were going to work to make the elections go and pull the other social development pieces along with the military effort. And our job was to set the security conditions to do that.

We're going to bring the Marines in to attempt to set security conditions to do a number of reconstruction pieces. I suspect, though, that McNeal will deploy them into the south to assist. But we need to fix the military and U.S. country team effort in Kabul first and get that set right, and then, the greater issue, which has been debated on both sides of the Atlantic, is how does this international effort work? There is talk of Patty Ashdown. That hasn't cobbled out quite the way we want it. But for McNeal, his 20 percent military effort at the coalition level, there is really nothing right now to plug into on the civilian side to drive progress in the other three-quarters of the country.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Well, Rick, do we have a strategy? Is there an overall strategy in Afghanistan now?

RICK BARTON: No, I think we actually have problems both with strategy and with clarity of leadership. In a situation like this where we are essentially supporting a country – 90 percent budget support, probably a little less than that now – but we are providing most of the critical services in the country, it's easy to think we're in charge. And even though we have had President Karzai there as an attractive symbol, it has been more symbolic than leadership. And that has put him in a precarious position.

And now we have him in a tired (?) position as well so that his administration as he is coming up to this reelection is showing great unpopularity among the people. And when we started doing these extensive measure of progress studies, he was very popular. He had a strong position. He was seen as the hope. So we have probably stayed with this too long, but now we are running of the risk of running another Potomac primary, where we will try to figure out who should lead this country from the greater Washington area and put ourselves further behind.

So we have to bring the Afghan people back forward again. They have got to be in a position of ownership, and we have lost that because they haven't really seen their two biggest concerns addressed. Their first concern is their own personal safety. It isn't as if the Taliban are overrunning the country; it's the threat of the Taliban now remind them of something that they are fully familiar with and that 4 million of them left and now have come back to reclaim their country as a result of. And if we don't address that public safety issue – and this where the strategy has to start – the center of gravity has really been in the south. And it now looks as if it's more provinces than it was when we were writing about this a year ago. It looks as if it has spread beyond the core of Helmand and Kandahar, Uruzgan, for sure now and probably a little farther.

But we haven't really been able to concentrate the military effort there. We haven't shown the flexibility. We have continued to deal with it in a franchise basis. We can trust the Canadians to do this, and the Dutch will do that, and we'll stay in our territory. And that is just not the way it's going to work. And it's not going to work for the Afghans either because they need to know that they can be saved when they are being attacked. That 15-minute response or 30-minute response, at the very least the one hour response, has to be provided for them because they are not capable of hanging out there much longer than that. They either have to run or they will be overrun in that period of time.

And it comes to some really fundamental things. When we studied this a year and a half ago, we were told there are not enough helicopters in that part of the country. We were told that you needed at least 70 to 100. We were told there were only 35 that were functioning. Now, when we went and took this to the Afghan ambassador here in town, he said, do you know how many NATO helicopters and light aircraft there are in Europe? And we said no, we are not aware of that. He said 4,000. Do you know how many there are in southern Afghanistan? We said no. He said 11.

There is obviously a capacity opportunity here. We haven't – and our feeling is that if we haven't even taken care of the most simple basic measurable response, which is another 50 to 70 helicopters, then we are really not as serious about this as we think we need to do. And so it all starts with commitment. It's not all about commitment, 10 years or 20 years; it's about commitment today in the places that matter, focusing the strategy and doing the job that needs to be done, so the people in the rest of the country feel safer and secure enough to be hopeful about their future.

The second part of the strategy is, very quickly, is that they don't feel the investment has gotten out of Kabul. And we have had a highly centralized effort, not unusual for a central government, we have decided to marry another central government. It was a marriage made in heaven. And the people happened to be everywhere but Kabul. And we have got to figure out ways of getting the money out. Now, the first thing you oftentimes hear is there is not capacity. Well, there is not capacity by the World Bank's standard; there is not capacity by the familiar standards.

But these are the most resourceful people on earth. They have survived the worst living conditions imaginable. And when you see something like their use of cell phones, you realize, well, they are capable of moving into the 21<sup>st</sup> century as well. So there must be something between the way we try to build up ministries in the center and the need of the people. And there have been some real successes in the country, the National Solidarity Program and others, that have engaged the people. But we haven't done enough. We are paying the salaries of teachers, paying the salaries of police, making them fundamentally capable, rather than imagining them as something really quite more elegant.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Nick, I want to give you a chance to respond to some of that. But let me just ask you this, and I'd like to get your thought on this as well. In light of the continuing uncertainty in Pakistan, the establishment of al Qaeda and Taliban sanctuaries in the mountains along the Afghan-Pakistani border, is Afghanistan now a more important priority than Iraq?

MR. BURNS: Oh gosh, I think they are both important, and I'm trying to avoid your question. But when you have 160,000 American troops in Iraq, when you have made this huge national commitment, we went in and took down the government of the country in 2003, I don't think you can say that somehow it slid in importance. They are both important, and we have to be successful in both places. And I don't know what is going to happen in our election in 2008, but whatever administration comes in will have to deal with both.

I don't see any reason why we should choose. We have made a much larger commitment of money and of financial resources and of troops in Iraq. What we have tried to do in Afghanistan is increase the number of American forces. When I became ambassador to NATO – when NATO went in 2003, we had 12,000 American troops in the country. With the Marines coming in this, bringing the 3,200 Marines, we'll be up to 30,000 American troops. So we have increased, we have more than doubled the American military presence there. We have kept up with the generosity of the Congress a substantial flow of money into Afghanistan. It's not the problem.

I would say – so I wouldn't choose. I think we have to – we're a global power. We have to play on all fields, and we have to be successful in both of these countries. I don't want to have to defend on every point of the contentions. I think that my three colleagues have made some very perceptive points. I'll just say three things, however. We have a strategy. I wouldn't want anyone here to think that we have been so distracted by Iraq that we haven't paid attention to Afghanistan. We have a very comprehensive strategy. The challenges, from my own point of view, has been implementing it. I think we know what we want to do on the civilian and military sides. We have been more successful on the military side than the civilian side.

The problem has been in combining our efforts with those of some of the other allies. On the U.S. side, we have a very well-equipped military force, east and south, in terms of helicopter support, combat service support, armored vehicles. The problem is in the NATO side. The European allies – and I don't know if Ambassador Jawad's statistic is right about 4,000 versus 11 helicopters. But there are certainly thousands of helicopters available to the alliance, but very few have made their way to support the European allies, and it's a major problem and a major failing of the NATO alliance. So I don't disagree with that.

I'd also say that we have not had a Kabul-only strategy. In fact, going back to – I remember going into Kandahar in 2002, we had already established the American Provincial Reconstruction Team about 20 kilometers outside of Kandahar. And we have had more than 20 Provincial Reconstruction Teams established. So you have a military team, very small. Usually in Kandahar, I think it was 60 or 70 soldiers –

MR. SCHIEFFER: Total.

MR. BURNS: – and probably about two-thirds more civilians. And you try to provide the civilian relief agencies and reservists and NGOs' protection to do work in difficult places. It hasn't worked perfectly, but since the very beginning of our commitment, we knew we had to get outside of Kabul, and we have tried to get outside of Kabul. There is an absorptive capacity

issue in some of the rural parts of Afghanistan. But we have done good things. We are just about – we, the international community, led by the U.S., just about to complete this ring road that goes from Kabul to Kandahar to Herat and back to Kabul. Absolutely essential to link the major cities to provide some means for people that have businesses to be able to use the roads for business purposes and also to have the security forces use those roads.

We have made some major progress in electrification of the country. We have built several thousand schools, and millions of kids are now back at school in Afghanistan who weren't in school under the Taliban. So I think we have had our successes. But I'll come back to one final summary point on just responding to some of this. We have a considerable number of challenges. And I don't think we can be successful unless our allies get more organized and make a greater sustained long-term commitment.

Measure it this way. We have been talking about the Balkans this week because of Kosovo. We have been in Bosnia for 13 years; we have been in Kosovo for 9 years, our relief agencies, our aid agencies, and the American military. We are going to have to be in Afghanistan for a long time to overcome some of these great challenges that we have all talked about today.

MR. SCHIEFFER: What do you think about that, Steve?

MR. COLL: About the length of American commitment, I think at least 10 years will be required. And I actually think that there may be enough patience and resources to sustain that commitment. There is certainly presently a much greater national consensus about that commitment than there is about Iraq. But in order to sustain – I think the lessons of American history are that in order to sustain a commitment of that scale in treasure and blood alike requires the American people to be convinced that there is a successful strategy available – that this is a winnable campaign and also that –

MR. SCHIEFFER: But do you see the danger there greater than the danger posed by Iraq right now? Or do you see it all part of the same piece? Or – I'm just trying to get, do we think our priorities in the right place right now?

MR. COLL: Well, I have a view about that that is certainly different than Nick's. But I certainly think that if you ask the narrow question, where does the direct threat to American soil lie, well, I think the administration acknowledges that it primarily comes from al Qaeda, and al Qaeda is primarily located in the Pakistan-Afghan area. The dangers that Iraq represents to American interests and to the interests of American allies are substantial, but they are of a different character, I guess I would say, at least at the moment. And I guess, the big view that I have that is different than Nick's is that I'm not convinced that the United States has the capacity to succeed in Iraq in the way that current policy foresees and to succeed in Afghanistan the way current policy foresees. I do not think that we have demonstrated that we have that national capacity.

And so I do think that the next administration, whether it is a McCain administration or a Democratic administration, will inevitably face – and will receive military advice that it faces

tradeoffs of a character – that simply this current policy will not prove sustainable in my judgment.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Any thoughts on that?

COL. LAMM: I tend to agree with Mr. Coll. I just finished over the weekend working with some German parliamentarians. And from a NATO perspective, they were very open and basically laid out the fact that from a German electorate perspective, nearly 50 percent of their electorate wanted to be out of Afghanistan immediately. And depending on if they are from Düsseldorf or Dortmund, 80 percent of the electorate didn't want anything to do with the south of Afghanistan where the fighting is.

And I think as we lay out the strategy, that is one thing we have to look at. And where the commander places those forces on the ground becomes very important. And the will, not only of the American public, which I think is from the perspective of Afghanistan, is sustainable over a longer period of time, maybe than Iraq. Both, as Ambassador pointed out, they are both must-wins, in my view. And we have to figure out how to get them both right.

The interesting thing about the helicopters is that is probably not the way to go about the strategy. Flying over the top of your problems doesn't endear you to the people on the ground that are living every day with the Taliban. We did that in Vietnam, reliance on helicopters and mobility, when in fact we found from 2004 to 2005, by getting the PRTs out, by getting small units out on the ground interfacing with people every day – that is what secures the center of gravity in Afghanistan – the Afghan people. We are going to have to show that kind of commitment across the country if we hope to keep the United Nations and their elections workers in this fight, which will be coming up in probably the early fall of 2009. They are going to want to know how long it is going to be, you know, if there is trouble at a polling place or an election training center. And to say we may be able to show up in a helicopter in an hour isn't going to cut it.

So we have a lot of challenges we need to work on. And the problem is we have our election coming up. So whatever the administration is, by the time the honeymoon is over and they are looking at March 2009, they face an Afghan election just several months off. And unless we have been working through administrations on this problem with our coalition partners with NATO, we are going to have a hard time pulling that election off in 2009. That is, I think is the next major event for Afghanistan. If the Taliban can unhinge that election, we have real strategic issues to come to terms with.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Start thinking about some questions you'd like to pose. We'll go to those in just a minute. Before we do, I'm going to say to you, Rick, let's say that you were named the next national security advisor, and you went in with your first meeting with the president –

MR. BARTON: (Cross talk) – good idea. (Laughter.)

MR. SCHIEFFER: – of either party. And what would you say to him –

MR. BARTON: Or her.

MR. SCHIEFFER: – about Afghanistan, about the foreign policy problems he has. Would this be at the top? Would it be number two, number three, where would you see it?

MR. BARTON: Well, I think there are a lot of things to say. One thing to establish right away is the United States is actually quite popular in Afghanistan. And so if you do – the surveys really aren't of much value in either country, in either Iraq or Afghanistan. But certainly the U.S. effort in Afghanistan has been seen by the people as one that they wanted to encourage. That is dramatically different than Iraq, where there may be people hanging onto us. And there are some parts of the population that would like us to be there. But clearly, if you gave them the choice of a reasonable departure within two years, in Iraq, people would probably opt for that.

In Afghanistan, people will recognize that they are a dependent state, but they don't want to be dependents. And this is – and we don't have to travel as far because these people really have had a much, much, much simpler way of life than what the essentially middle class of Iraq has seen. So we really have to think about it in a very different way. I happen to think when you combine Afghanistan with Pakistan and India and really that neighborhood that this gets to be a much, much, much more complex case than Iraq, which is plenty complex.

But I do think that this is going –

MR. SCHIEFFER: And more dangerous.

MR. BARTON: And really more dangerous. It has many more elements. And if we make the wrong step in the northwest corner of Pakistan, Karachi is on fire. And Karachi on fire doesn't fit in anybody's plans of any kind. Nobody has any capability. We are a global community that can possibly deal with East Timor on a good day. And thinking about something that's a 160 times bigger is really absurd. So I would be – the one thing I would be is quite a bit less ambitious and more modest and more humble about what the United States can achieve. Yes, we have an absolutely critical role. But to be everywhere and thinking about this in terms of victory is really way beyond our national commitment and our likely ability.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Well, General Jones, when he was there on his survey, said we're not winning in Afghanistan right now. What is the situation now? I mean, is it just sort of a stalemate at this point? Are we losing?

MR. COLL: I don't think – I think not winning is probably a pretty decent choice because of its ambiguity. (Laughter.)

MR. SCHIEFFER: Is that the best we can do?

MR. COLL: Well, no, it's not the best that we can do. But the quick summary – my version of the quick summary would be that the Taliban still cannot attack in formation. They still cannot gather in one place. They have difficult holding territory. They were doing a little

bit better than that over the last year or two. But they do not have a sanctuary inside Afghanistan. On Pakistan's side, of course, they do. But they are insinuating themselves as insurgents do into broader populations through intimidating and violence, as well as through their quasi-political and religious appeals. And they are exploiting uncertainty among the broader anti-Taliban Afghan population about where this whole project is going, who is going to be the winner – as the Taliban say, they have the watches; we have the time.

And that was Mullah Omar's only witticism, so far as I know. (Laughter.) And it may have been stolen from someone else. In any event, that attitude is something that ordinary fence-sitting Afghans are well aware of. And so it's something that the Taliban have prayed upon. They have exploited local conditions. They have exploited failures of local governance. They have exploited the drug economy and criminal networks to, you know, sort of increase their position. But they are not strategically winning. And, after all, we are really only talking about half, 60 percent of the population in the first instance, let's be clear. In the north and the west, non-Pashtun populations show no signs of being interested in any version of this project. They have some of their own local criminal governance problems, but they are not of a strategic character.

So it's far from dire, but the problem is that Afghan patience and Afghan attitudes are moving in the wrong direction, and so that needs to be addressed soon.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Well, let's go to the audience. Right here.

Q: Yes, my name is – (off mike) – and I am from Pakistan.

My question is actually to understand what is the negative role that Pakistan is playing, and what – for example, I heard that we are paying Pakistan only, like, \$700 per soldier per month, whereas we are spending like \$60,000 per soldier per month in Iraq, and I don't think that this amount is less in Afghanistan.

Pakistan has lost more soldier than NATO has lost in Afghanistan. Pakistan is kind of on parallel – (background noise) – because of some other policies we are destroying their country physically because of this dictator in power. And my question to the chief of staff is about drugs and like, the – (off mike) – that the protection of opium on the highest level. I used to work on the – (off mike) – seven or eight years ago, and I remember we wanted to establish Pakistan in that other state because of some general was making good money. Who should be blamed now for the highest protection of opium in Afghanistan because Pakistani soldiers are not involved in Afghanistan anymore? And about –

(Cross talk.)

Q: It's very easy to blame poor Pakistan, you know. We support those corrupt politicians. Let me give you an example –

MR. SCHIEFFER: Well, we got your point.

COL. LAMM: We got it.

MR. SCHIEFFER: I think we got it.

All right, Ambassador, do you want to take a shot at it?

MR. BURNS: I'd be happy to. Thank you very much for your questions and for your comments.

I hope you didn't misunderstand what I tried to say. Maybe I failed to say it clearly enough; let me try again. Pakistan, I believe, but more importantly our leadership believes, is probably the most important country to the United States in our worldwide struggle against al Qaeda. I think, as Steve said, that's where al Qaeda is. Al Qaeda has a safe-haven inside of Pakistan itself. We are enormously grateful for the efforts made by the government and people. We are very well aware that the Pakistani army has suffered a great number of losses of soldiers and wounded, dead and wounded, as the Pakistani military has tried to engage al Qaeda and the Taliban.

So we're grateful for what the Pakistani government has done, but there's no question that when the political crisis really intensified in the summer and autumn of 2007 that the Pakistani government's ability and inclination to go at those terrorist groups began to flag. And so we'd like to see, once the new government forms itself in Islamabad, and that's a Pakistani issue, we'd like to see that new government turn again towards effective military operations and consistent pressure on the two groups inside your borders that are not only dangerous for your own society and government but also very dangerous for the Afghans and for our forces in Afghanistan, al Qaeda and the Taliban. That is in your self-interest; your government and I think many of even the opposition leaders have said this is a cancer eating away at Pakistan, so I think we have a combined interest there.

But it's been the lack of effectiveness of that military effort, especially in recent months, which has been very troubling. What does that do? It gives these two groups the capacity to hide, to seek refuge, to replenish themselves, to seek money and support, particularly off the drug trade inside of Pakistan; to strike across the border; it's a very difficult terrain to fight in; at our forces, Afghan forces and the NATO forces. I think there's been a lot of interesting discussion here that this is in essence a two-front war, and it's a Taliban uprising that's taken place in two countries. So there has to be a more effective combined effort by Pakistan and Afghanistan and the international forces to confront that threat. We've not seen the degree of cohesion between those two governments, Pakistan and Afghanistan, or between the leaderships that we'd like to see in this kind of warfare.

MR. SCHIEFFER: All right. Colonel, you want to –

COL. LAMM: Very quickly. No matter which, or how, the political situation turns out in Islamabad, from my perspective the current government in Islamabad and any future government, I would suspect, is going to be very sincere about controlling its borders with Afghanistan. The problem is one of practicality and control, to say yes, we will do what we can

in the Fatan (ph) along the Afghan border. Given the terrain and the issues, given the folks who occupy those border positions in the Army and other services, it's a very dubious task to say yes, we are going to control the border and keep folks from crossing back and forth. It has always been a very difficult problem.

On the narcotics side – and I'll just go back to President Kharzai. Right after his inauguration he convened a narcotics jirga in December of 2004. And that year, with the concerted effort with USAID state, the United States and at that time, under the Bonn agreement, the U.K. was the lead nation for narcotics. We had a broad campaign in the Helmand Valley and that year, narcotics production went from about 130,000 hectares to 104,000 hectares. That sort of unity effort came apart later in 2005 and then, of course, in 2006 it was up to 160,000 hectares and we're going to be near 200,000 now.

That problem rests squarely with the people of Afghanistan. And discussions about, you know, aerial spring, discussions about other countries making deals to take care of the property problem; that's not going to help. That has to come from the Afghans themselves with a great deal of international assistance, a comprehensive plan that not only talks about eradicating poppy on the one hand, but has to be teamed up very, very carefully and adroitly with alternate livelihood programs and jobs programs to bring it down, which is how we did it in 2004. That takes a large U.S. and international effort, all leading the Afghans from behind to get them to propel themselves to take care of that problem.

MR. SCHIEFFER: All right, one more. Another question back here.

Q: Thank you, Bob.

Ambassador Burns, the first comment about Afghanistan was – (off mike) – a democratically elected government. Mr. Coll pointed out that – well, he mentioned both Afghanistan and Iraq, and Mr. Barton said that Afghanistan was by far the greatest problem. And the basic problem is that Iraq has an educated people and a resource, oil, to develop. Afghanistan has basically a tribal country, and not a well-educated country, and has only its resource is poppies. The true stories of development in the world – Taiwan, Korea, Singapore, Malaysia, Spain first and most recently, Chile – they developed a middle-class society, then they could have a true democracy. I'd like comments on that, please.

MR. COLL: I'll take that because I'd like to defend Afghanistan's national potential. I think that it's very easy, after 20 years of warfare triggered by the Soviet invasion in 1979 and the decimation that Afghanistan endured in the ensuing 20 years, and the retreat into exile of millions and millions of capable middle-class professionals, it's easy to forget that between about 1920 and about 1970, Afghanistan lived at peace with itself and with its neighbors. It had a multi-ethnic national army; it developed a parliament and a senate. It had a very light central government and many problems of poverty and illiteracy in the countryside, but there is an Afghanistan. This is not a country that needs to be invented.

The reason that the international intervention has succeeded to the degree that it has, has not to do, as we've been discussing, with the extraordinary competence of the interveners. It has

to do with the national will of Afghans to rebuild their own society, to reclaim what was lost during this 25 years of warfare. And also, frankly, they were exhausted with themselves, and prepared to make new accommodations and to come back to this country.

And if you go to Afghanistan you find extraordinary people who are there, from Australia and Germany and San Francisco, making financial and other investments. This is not a wealthy diaspora; this is not like the, you know, Indian or Chinese middle-class diaspora. Even the best of the Afghan diaspora doesn't have much to invest and that, to me, is the still-present moral case, political case, apart from the interests, apart from everything else. This is, after all, an Afghan project and there is nothing about that period of Taliban rule that is anything but an aberration from the history that is now at stake.

MR. BURNS: I'd certainly like to reinforce what Steve just said because clearly, these are incredibly resourceful people. Four million of them have returned; it was part of our early success, the initial success really led by the United States, to get these people back home and allow them the opportunity.

Where I think we've missed – where we've missed some opportunities is in anchoring the little bit, the tiny middle class that is trying to get traction again. And when you have tens of thousands of teachers out there who are not getting salaries, you have the police who are getting paid much less than the military because the military, we're paying almost directly from the Pentagon, whereas the police were kind of orphaned for the first few years, you can't – these are the people that we're going to build around in this country. And this is part of the way we generally do business. We tend to try to find a ministry in Kabul that's going to be able to reach out, and it's hard. None of the central government people can really travel around the country very freely, certainly not by road in many, many places. And so you've got to find ways of reaching to the individual citizen and using this sort of resurgent middle class, if you could call it that. It's rather small, but these are the people in many cases who have stayed in the region as well, and they've had very difficult lives.

MR. SCHIEFFER: All right, another question. Chris?

Q: Thank you.

Just a question for the panel: There have been persistent reports over the years that the senior Taliban leadership has received refuge in Pakistan and including in some of the settled areas like Quetta, and yet there's been a failure to pick these guys up, arrest them, detain them. Is that a failure of intelligence; is it a failure of will? Are they getting active protection by the Pakistani military or elements in the Pakistani military? Why has it been so difficult to round up some of the senior leadership of the Taliban?

MR. SCHIEFFER: Who would like to have a go at that?

COL. LAMM: I think it's a combination of all of those things, that depending on where you are, north Waziristan, south Waziristan, the terrain is absolutely forbidding. Number two, the area because of tribal customs is going to have a tendency to protect those folks, okay. And I

think the most important thing is just the national will. And as somebody pointed out and I can attest to, in 2004, the summer of 2004, winter of 2005, there were nearly 70,000 Pakistanis working in the FATA. Horrendous casualties; lost more folks to IEDs in one month than we were losing in Iraq at one time. Absolutely heroic efforts to try to work that problem, but I think getting them the right intelligence, the pinpoint intelligence and then the combination of terrain and will. And then, from a U.S. perspective, you know, under what political conditions do you do anything across the border and then you work the delicate balance of the Pakistan government itself, going in there. So it is a very, very complicated problem.

I remember General Barnow in the first few months he was there said, you know, we'll have bin Laden's head on a plate in about two months. I said, ooh, sir, you know – (laughter) – maybe, you know, maybe we don't want to say that. And then I would point it out, you know, and what I would tell reporters is they began saying, you know, why is so hard to get him, why is so hard to catch him. And I reminded a lot of my American colleagues that we had a criminal who was hiding in the mountains of North Carolina after he bombed the Olympics, and he hid for five years. And we were able to walk over that terrain; we were able to put dogs on that terrain, and we couldn't find him until he made a mistake one day and got hungry at a 7-11. (Laughter.) And the problem in Pakistan and the FATA is much more formidable, much more formidable.

MR. SCHIEFFER: We'll let – let –

Q: I'd like you ask you more about the reports of some of these guys, like Mullah Omar, who were actually in Quetta in some –

COL. LAMM: Quetta, Miran Shah, yeah, yeah. Sure.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Well, let's talk a little – let me just bring up Osama bin Laden here, since – (laughter).

COL. LAMM: I'm sorry I brought that up. (Laughter.)

MR. SCHIEFFER: Do we think we'll ever catch him, or will it make a difference if we do?

(Cross talk, laughter.)

MR. COLL: Yes. I doubt that he'll die of disease or old age, but I wouldn't bet my house on it. (Laughter.) I think that the history of these fugitive narratives in that part of the world is that, eventually, somebody makes a mistake. It's just that sometimes it takes awhile and in this case, I think that among the presumed host population he has acquired a spiritual status that makes it even difficult for someone who might wish to move to Arizona with their \$25 million to persuade themselves and their family to act. Also it's very difficult, I think, to penetrate al Qaeda's security vanguard around him, which is almost – I presume, almost all Arab nationals. I'm sure, if I were them, I'd be limiting local access to operational information.

But even if one of those people decided to turn him in, it's just mechanically very difficult to figure out how you would do that. I mean, many of the others who have been eventually betrayed by somebody in their circle turned out, at that moment, or were forecast – it could be forecasted that they would be in a city or in some other accessible area; many of them were taken down in hotels and houses and that sort of thing. And I just think it's difficult. I do think it'll happen eventually.

The more interesting question here is my parlor-game, if I may, which is I – if somebody walked in the room right now and said, he's been killed and then you say, okay, don't tell me where; put a map up on the wall and take a pin, put it on the map, and whoever gets closest to the hole wins, where would you put your pin. That's the question that I ask, and I would put mine in Miran Shah.

MR. SCHIEFFER: What difference would it make?

MR. COLL: I think it would make a significant difference. I think that al Qaeda, obviously, in its revitalized form is operating coherent leadership; it's operating media operations; it's running all kinds of operations. Breaking up its leadership would not put an instant end to those operations but it would certainly make a difference; taking him off the airwaves would make a difference, and there's also the issue of justice.

MR. SCHIEFFER: What – well, I lost my train of thought. It sometimes happens.

A question out here.

Q: Hello, my name is Stan Byers. I spent two years in Afghanistan working with the U.S. government; I spent a year among the PRTs there. And while I think there's a lot of real successes that have occurred there the extent to them compared to the needs and sustainability of them is a big question still, and we're not sure how effective it's been yet.

But one of the things we saw as field officers was there wasn't really enough – in the country weren't really the structures, the procedures, organization in place, the training for officers. And then here, we're being hamstrung by our decisions being made centralized here in Washington that kept us from really doing a lot of things that we need to do on the ground. And I was just wondering what thinking went into to looking about and how those kind of organizational issues could be looked at.

MR. BURNS: I guess I'd say thank you very much for your service, first of all, in Afghanistan.

We are champions of the PRTs because as we, the United States, have participated in them both in Iraq and Afghanistan and they really pioneered more in Afghanistan first, it enables us to get outside the capital city and the other regional capitals to get where we can begin to work with real people who are objects of intimidation by the Taliban, and marry military force with humanitarian and economic work. So the concept, we think, is sound.

The problem, I think, in Afghanistan, or one of the problems, is that – I hate to keep coming back to our allies, but I'm a former ambassador of NATO so I tend to focus on the allies. We haven't seen the degree of commitment from some of our allies to lead them and to staff them, as we've seen from the United States. We are running the majority of PRTs, we the United States and Afghanistan. We need to see more buy-in from some of our allies.

The other problem is, while you don't want to have a blueprint that all PRTs need to follow slavishly, you do want to have a sense of unity among them in terms of purpose. And I think that some countries have kind of gone in their own direction and have concentrated so much on the economic support side that they've to provide the protection that is needed for those very people.

Most of our PRTs now, as you know, are in the East, United States PRTs and the allies that led the others in the north, west, and south. It's a sound concept; we ought to continue to be devoted to it. We can't sit inside the embassy or hide behind the walls of the embassy, and we certainly got to get outside, where the problems are. The problems right now – and I agree that the Taliban is a considerable tactical challenge but not a strategic challenge at the present time – with the government of Afghanistan is to be more effective in Helmand, Uruzgan, and Kandahar.

I'll give you one example: The Canadians are in Kandahar. It's the largest commitment Canada's made of arms since the Korean War. They've had 79 Canadians killed, many more wounded; it's the highest casualty rate of any country in Afghanistan, the highest Canadian casualty rate since the Korean War. They're there all alone and we've been trying very hard, from the president on down, to convince one of those four continental allies, France, Germany, Italy or Spain, to come down from the north and from Kabul and to work with the Canadians, and to contribute troops to stand with them. And if they can do that I think the Canadian prime minister has said he'll stay in, Canada will stay in. If the allies will not come and work with the Canadians, then they'll have to leave. That's the imperative that I think the Canadian government has set out. And it is a real task to the unity of this alliance. We cannot be effective if four or five countries – nine in all, but four or five have the preponderance of force in the south and east. And there's a NATO summit coming up in the first week of April, and we do hope some of these countries will stand up and volunteer to make a commitment as the Canadians have made.

MR. BARTON: I think one of the problems that we have in Afghanistan is that, even if all of the NATO troops became fighting troops, we'd probably have enough to do the job in the part of the country where the fighting really is taking place. So there has to be not only a wholesale commitment but then there has to be a focus, probably, on where the fighting needs to be done. And so that really speaks to kind of the weakness of the strategy as well.

And while the PRTs are a good initiative, they're really not a huge initiative in terms of the funding and whatnot. And we've done it a bit the way we set military bases around the United States, that we've sort of given everybody a PRT when, in fact, where we really need them is where it's dangerous because if it's safe, which it is in about half the country, you don't need to have that military presence to go along with the provision of assistance. So we've spread these around; there should be greater concentration where the danger is greatest.

And I think ultimately – I mean, the question was really one about how the U.S. government is structured and whether we have the kind of focus that we want. I believe that we continue to see a division between the way our military wants to take this thing on and the way the civilian side wants to take it on, and even within the civilian side there are differences of opinion. And I think we're much too likely to provide what's already on a military base or in our warehouse in terms of assistance, rather than what is needed on the ground in Afghanistan. It has to be driven by the needs of the people. If we're going to have this under – if we're not going to have enough soldiers there, then we really have to find a way to empower the Afghans much more directly. We've tried to do that by training, but the argument for the helicopters is not that we should fight the war from the air, but rather that we should be able to provide relief to the Afghans who are given the opportunity to hold their ground when they are attacked and whatnot.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Colonel, did you want to add to that?

COL. LAMM: Well, on PRTs, two things: If you look at the construct from 2004 to 2005, in fact, those PRTs went in the east and in the south, and they are mostly American PRTs. We have PRTs in other places now because our allies choose to have them in Chaghcharan and Mazar-e Sharif and other places. The key to sustaining them was always to work at a grassroots level with some American CERP money, Commanders Emergency Response Program, those funds, and then to basically solicit from the local elders and the local folks, what is that you want; that's what the PRT's doing. Then, we can allocate CERP money, microeconomic projects, to work those things.

And at the same time, what's supposed to be happening with the local governance is bringing them into the PRTs to build their expertise and providing for their own people to sustain this effort, or maybe in the future you just have to put money into it and then they're doing the work themselves with somebody there monitoring. That's the plan.

If you come back to D.C., somebody wants to have a PRT school. And I get you one year boots on the ground, or sneakers on the ground, or whatever it is you had, and from a chief-of-staff perspective I need you for the whole year. To have you two months here getting trained up, that's sort of nice but quite frankly, you get OJT training on the ground is probably most effective.

And then, as the ambassador pointed out, whenever you pool something back to D.C. we have very nasty tendency of cookie-cutting, you know, this thing and well, they all need to look the same. Military folks are notorious for this; they walk into a PRT and they want the map here and the sit-rep over here – (laughter) – and so on and so forth. And all these PRTs are different. If it's an agricultural area it's going to look one way; if there's herds it's going to look another way. If you're in a poppy region that's farming poppy, it may look another way and we have to be very flexible about that.

The problem with big bureaucracies is, is they tend not to be very flexible and let you get on with your business the way you see fit down there, and then support you.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Let me just start and just go around the panel here.

I'd just like to ask each of you, what do you think is going to happen in Afghanistan in the short term, over the next year or so, and what is the most important thing that you think the United States should do in regard to its policy toward Afghanistan?

MR. COLL: Create conditions for a successful election in 2009 and extend the PRT model and the counterinsurgency model.

MR. SCHIEFFER: And what do you perceive happening there, Steve? I mean –

MR. COLL: I think there's –

MR. SCHIEFFER: – exactly how – is the situation really fragile now?

MR. COLL: No, I don't think that the – I think that the Taliban – if conditions are not set aggressively and intelligently, the Taliban could disrupt, force the postponement of what would otherwise ruin the 2009 election. And that would be a significant event; not the end of the story, but perhaps the most demoralizing event so far. So it needs to be prevented; the opposite needs to occur. A successful election that expresses the will – including some of the dissent – of the Afghan people, that it's seen by them as a legitimate national event needs to occur, and it requires international support to achieve.

MR. BURNS: Bob, I'd say we need to be patient, understand we're involved in a long-term effort and that we need to convince our Congress, the next administration as well as our allies, that we've got to stay in for the long term. If we plan short-term, two or three years, we will not be successful.

And on a more micro level, I think there are two issues that are most profound for us. The first is to try to provide for a more effective counterinsurgency strategy against the Taliban. We will not do it unless we have that international – much greater unity and a sense of purpose, central purpose, on the humanitarian-civilian side to marry up with what I judge to be – I very much admire the U.S. military – a largely successful U.S. military effort. I think it's been weakened by the fact there's been no international economic support behind it.

And finally, I'd say a real challenge for the Afghans is this narcotic problem because the largest poppy crop in the history of Afghanistan, recorded history, is poisoning their society. That money is fueling the Taliban insurgency; it's contributing to heroin use because there's great demand for it in Russia and in Western Europe. It's going to cripple that society if they don't get their arms around it and we've suggested to President Kharzai that among the many things you need to do to combat a narcotics problem of this dimension, you do have to look at eradication, very tough eradication, as well as alternative in-coms (ph) and crop substitution and interdiction. If you don't have eradication and if you're going to over 200,000 hectares per year, that's a monumental problem to resolve and I think –

MR. SCHIEFFER: Well, did not the Taliban all but eradicate the poppy?

(Laughter.)

MR. BURNS: Well, here's the hypocrisy of the Taliban. Sure, they were very tough on it when they were in power and now they're living off of it. And so one way to deny them tactical successes as an insurgent group is to dry up some of that money that fuels them.

MR. SCHIEFFER: But I mean, I guess what I'm saying – is there anything we can learn from them? (Laughter.) I mean, if they could do it –

COL. LAMM: We actually can't use those kinds of methods. (Laughter.)

It would make Abu Ghraib pale in comparison to what the Taliban was doing to folks who were growing poppy. (Chuckles.)

MR. SCHIEFFER: Anything else you want to – thank you. Colonel?

COL. LAMM: Well, patience. I think it's a 20, 25-year, nearly a generation effort, and it has to be an international effort.

The second piece is keeping the patience is whether the election goes well or not, and it really – we need to put our best foot forward from the international and the U.S. effort to make that thing work, and particularly keeping the U.N. in the fight. If I had 3200 Marines, their major task over the next few months would be setting the security conditions in the south, where I'd put them, so that U.N. workers can get out there with the joint election management board and the Afghans, and get that election moving along. That would be a key task for them.

If you can run the election in the face of the Taliban saying you're not going to be able to register voters, you're not going to be able to set up polling places, and you can do it and you execute it, it shows the people on the ground that the Afghan government set out to do this task with the international folks and by gosh, they did it. And there's great goodness that comes out of that which, after the 2004 election, drove down the poppy use, the hectares under production. It extended the government's power and reach throughout the country and you need to capitalize on that. Capitalizing on the political process, the election, is something that would do us a great deal of good in 2009.

MR. BARTON: I would say three things. I think knowledge of the field, security and then the Afghan ownership. Knowledge of the field – for many of you probably read the Post story of the Dutch soldiers: Even in a highly targeted community where we thought we knew a great deal, they went in to fight and almost all of the intelligence they had was of little use and of little value, and that's in a place that we knew what was going on. This is a huge area; we obviously don't understand the cross-border dimensions. We're bleeding into Pakistan with our – psychologically because we feel it is a threat to our soldiers. That's a very dangerous drift that we have. So let's start with at least really knowing much more than sort of formal intelligence will provide to us.

On the security issue, we've got to make the Afghans feel that the place is getting safer. There will be an expansion of terrorist attacks in the country, but not areas of the country that have been taken over or that are effectively run by the Taliban. We have to reduce that; people have to – the Afghans have to feel that's shrinking.

And then on the Afghan ownership – lots of things to be said about it, but why don't we start with the senior leadership of the country. And why don't we encourage President Kharzai to finish strongly. Let's give him an exit strategy; let's not hold on to these guys until they're so fatigued that the only thing that holds them up is the United States. He's done valiant service. He's been a good leader but he is tired, and all of these signs of corruption and of complaints among the people really tend to come back to the senior leadership. So let's hold him responsible, let's give him what he needs to finish strongly. That means a transition; that means a succession plan – not that we come up with. Once he realizes he's leaving he'll start to think perhaps, and others will as well, about what the next leadership of Afghanistan should look like because no country should depend on one person, and no alliance should be so completely dependent on it.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Do I take it all of you believe that the United States must be in Afghanistan?

MR. BARTON: The 10-year plan is – because 10 years is a long time for Americans.

MR. COLL: Absolutely. Apparently it's the minimum ante, according to – (laughter) – I'm absolutely, compared to ante (?) that much.

MR. SCHIEFFER: And do you think it is absolutely necessary to U.S. security for us to be there? Put Afghanistan and its people aside, is it vital for America's security for us to be there?

MR. BURNS: Bob, I'd look at it this way. For most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, we looked at Europe as the focal point of American national security interests. I think that strategic attention is now in the Middle East and South Asia. It's those two regions that are producing the mortal threats that could undermine the foundations of our own government and country in the worst-case dimension. So I'm personally convinced that we must be in South Asia, both in a supportive relationship to a new Pakistani government and also an effective strategy in Afghanistan to safeguard our vital interests right here at home.

MR. SCHIEFFER: And you agree with that, Steve?

MR. COLL: I do. I would only add that, you know, there are some academics now who parse priority of Pakistan versus Afghanistan, and argue because nuclear materials and weapons are on Pakistani soil it's an even greater priority. My own view is that the destinies of those two countries and the relationship to American security interests, vital interests, are inseparable. And so the success of Afghanistan, in my mind, is inseparable from the project of also attempting to achieve a stable, modernizing, democratic and peaceful Pakistan. So, yes.

COL. LAMM: Absolutely. Both are intertwined. And if Pakistanis begin to see – the other complication here is if Pakistanis begin to see American leadership in Afghanistan waning, they will hedge their own strategic bets in the country and meddle inside Afghanistan. And I think we see a little of that now. So they're both inseparable; they're intertwined, and that is an area that I suspect could very easily, if there's failure there become an ungoverned space where nefarious things happen.

Iraq, on the other hand, I'm not sure that becomes an ungoverned space no matter how it turns out.

MR. SCHIEFFER: You want to wind it up, Rick?

MR. BARTON: Well, I think it's something we've really got to think about because we've accepted that terrorists are coming from this particular place in the world and so, therefore, it's a central concern of this country.

The key 21<sup>st</sup> century relationship is going to be the U.S. and China. And if we're making as great an effort there, do we have a Chinese student in every high school in America? Do we have an American high school student in every high school in China? That would probably give us a great sense about the 21<sup>st</sup> century working rather well.

It's not that it's unimportant, but I think it needs to be rethought because the critical question if we get attacked is, is it going to be where these people came from or is it going to be how we react to it. And I think that still is to be determined. I've been surprised in the conversations that I had a chance to do around this country, that there are many who think our first reaction to 9/11 wasn't particularly appropriate, that we had this global war on terror and then we did not ask for the sacrifice. But when I ask people, okay, if there's another attack, what do we do, it doesn't seem as if that's been established in the public realm yet, either.

MR. SCHIEFFER: All right. Well, obviously, this is to be continued.

Gentlemen, I want to thank all of you. Thank all of you for coming today.

(Applause.)

(END)